COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

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COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS is intended to provide quick updates on issues of interest to members and affiliates of the Council of Ontario Universities (COU). It is produced regularly throughout the academic year. This issue covers the months of January and February 2004.

Report on supply and demand of graduate degree holders released

COU recently distributed the report of its Task Force on Future Requirements for Graduate Education in Ontario, chaired by University of Western President Paul Davenport. The Task Force was established to develop a projection of the probable demand for graduate education over the next decade and released its findings in the report, *Advancing Ontario's Future Through Advanced Degrees*. As it stands now, Canada's labour market demand for graduates with master's and doctoral degrees exceeds the Canadian supply, and this demand continues to grow as all jurisdictions strive to increase their innovation, competitiveness and prosperity. To meet this demand, the Ontario university sector must increase its graduate enrolments by 88% – virtually doubling it current graduate enrolment capacity – within a decade.

The report offers a preliminary analysis of the costs associated with a doubling of graduate enrolment. These costs include full funding for some 30,000 additional students, new operating and capital funds to hire professors and build/equip the necessary instructional facilities, and a doubling (at least) of the number of graduate scholarships currently available. The report calls on the provincial government to establish the 10-year goal of doubling graduate enrolments at Ontario universities, and further recommends that the government move immediately to ensure full funding for graduate enrolments and to begin developing a detailed plan for increasing graduate enrolments in the next five years.

For a copy of *Advancing Ontario's Future Through Advanced Degrees*, visit the COU web site (www.cou.on.ca).

Budget dialogues underway

Budget 2004 dialogues are underway, with the government employing a number of formats to get the best, widespread advice from the people of Ontario on budget issues and priorities.

On February 9, 2004, Premier McGuinty launched *Delivering Change: Budget Town Hall 2004* with Ontarians from all walks of life. "Ontarians have told us to help students succeed, keep Ontarians healthy, create safe, clean and livable communities, and build a prosperous economy – while living within our means," the Premier said.

Delivering Change: Budget Town Hall 2004 includes:

- ***Regional Town Halls***, hosted by cabinet ministers, and open to the public on a first-come, first-served basis by calling a toll-free hotline to register. In addition, many MPPS will be holding Town Halls with local constituents.

- ***TownHallOntario.gov.on.ca***, a new web site that gives Ontarians more information about our priorities and the current fiscal situation and, soon, the opportunity to give the government their best advice online.
- ***Citizen Dialogues***, day-long sessions, run by an independent organization, that take a representative group of citizens through a discussion of budget priorities and approaches.
- ***Ministry of Finance Roundtables***, which bring together organizations and institutions from various sectors.

First phase of undergraduate admission cycle successfully completed

With the release of its preliminary report on secondary school application statistics on January 21, 2004, the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC) successfully completed the first phase of the application cycle for fall 2004. By the January 14th application deadline, a total of 71,222 secondary school students had applied for admission to Ontario universities. Of that number, all but 2,214 applied online. Total full-time university student enrolment is expected to top 326,000 in fall 2004, representing an increase of 5.1% over last year, or 28.6% over 2001.

In December 2003, an average of approximately 800 applications were filed daily. The majority of applications were received after the holiday break, with the largest single day of processing peaking at 5,662 on January 13, 2004. OUAC's computer systems and servers readily handled the volume, while the Centre's help desk staff dealt with any technical difficulties, working days and evenings in December and January. The online systems enable OUAC staff to process applications quickly and efficiently, which means that processing is up-to-date and Ontario universities receive most of their application data in a shorter period of time.

There was also an increase of approximately 3,500 non-secondary school applications over last year at this time. Finalized applicant and application statistics for this division will be available in March 2004.

All OUAC processing divisions are now online

All OUAC undergraduate and professional applications are now online. Rehabilitation sciences, the last division to go online, has proven to be the most successful transition. This academic cycle, only 23 paper applications for rehabilitation services programs were requested and mailed to potential applicants – a dramatic decrease when compared to the 2003 cycle where 4,096 paper applications were requested and mailed to potential applicants.

All professional divisions except the law school division have implemented a user-fee system for those applicants who choose to apply using a paper application form over the efficient, online system.

A new electronic system of amendments has been introduced this year for the teacher education division and the undergraduate non-secondary (105) division. The groundwork for the successful "Review and Change" system was laid with the development of the secondary school (101) system in 2003. The widely used system has meant that changes can be processed quickly and efficiently by OUAC and that fewer part-time staff are needed to enter and code the modifications mailed in by applicants.

New Minister attends meeting of OPAS board

On December 8, 2003, Mary Anne Chambers, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, attended the meeting of the OPAS Board of Directors. The Minister provided a brief outline of some of her priorities, which include greater ability to transfer credits among postsecondary institutions, greater collaboration, and improved use of the skills of new immigrants. A discussion of tuition levels, private-sector support and accessibility followed the Minister's remarks.

EDI transcript requests flowing through OUAC

In 2003, OUAC began a partnership with the Ontario College Application Services to develop a system whereby college and university transcripts could be exchanged between the educational partners. The system went into production in mid-November. Through the effective collaboration of colleges and universities, applicants are now able to request both college and university transcripts on the same application. To date, the number of transcripts exchanged totals 8,461. This represents 2,397 university transcripts requested by college applicants and 6,064 college transcripts requested by university applicants.

Additionally, OUAC, in co-operation with postsecondary institutions in British Columbia, has established the infrastructure to support the exchange of transcripts from B.C. colleges and universities to Ontario universities for future growth opportunities.

Underinvestment in universities lead story in *For the Record*

The February 2004 issue (Vol. 7, No. 1) of *For the Record* leads off with a story on how underinvestment in Ontario universities is a key factor in a 10% "prosperity gap" between the province and peer U.S. states. This issue also highlights the increasing market demand for graduates with master's and doctoral degrees, and the need for Ontario universities to be able to virtually double graduate enrolment during this decade to meet the demand. A special supplement features the members of Council for the academic year 2003-2004, as well as the many committees, special groups and affiliates that contribute to the work of COU. For a copy of the newsletter, visit the COU web site (www.cou.on.ca).

Workshop on college-university collaboration planned for May

On May 14, 2004, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will host a workshop on college-university collaboration, particularly regarding credit transfer in Ontario. The Toronto workshop is designed to bring together academic leaders from across the postsecondary sectors to promote dialogue and build consensus on a work plan to increase credit transfer opportunities and greater collaboration over the next two years. Among the invited participants are academic vice-presidents of Ontario universities and colleges. Guest speakers will highlight future trends in society, economy and education.

Queen's University host of conference on higher education

On February 13 to 14, 2004, Queen's University hosted a conference on Higher Education in Canada that was organized by the university's John Deutsch Institute for the Study of Economic Policy and co-sponsored by COU.

The conference was scheduled in conjunction with the February Council meeting to enable Executive Heads and Academic Colleagues to participate. In addition to Council members, the conference was attended by university faculty (chiefly academic economists), government officials, and representatives of organizations such as the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada and the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance.

Major themes at the conference included key issues in higher education in the U.S. and Canada; the role of colleges and universities and returns on postsecondary education; the contribution of higher education to regional innovation; the role of government in financing postsecondary education; the demographics of student demand and participation of different income groups; tuition fees and student assistance; and enhancing quality.

McMaster University President Peter George, Chair of the COU Quality and Financing Task Force, delivered the dinner address on the interim report from the Task Force.

The papers presented at the conference will be revised and published in a book that will be issued by the John Deutsch Institute.

AUCC President honoured at Council dinner

Each year, one of Council's five regularly scheduled meetings is held at a member institution; the site of February's meeting was Queen's University in Kingston. At the dinner held on February 12, 2004, Queen's University Principal Bill Leggett greeted Council members. The evening presented a welcome opportunity for Executive Heads and Academic Colleagues to extend their appreciation to Robert Giroux, President of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. The retiring Dr. Giroux has made outstanding contributions to higher education across Canada, and has also been a valued contributor to COU. He will be leaving office on March 31, 2004.

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